

General Background on the Jane Lawton Farm to School Initiative

- **Background on Bill**

- Entitled Jane Lawton Farm-to-School Program (Senate Bill 158)
 - Jane Lawton is a former state delegate who passed away in 2007
 - The bill was created in her memory
- Created during the 2008 legislative session
 - The lead sponsors were Senator Jamie Raskin and Delegate Sheila Hixson (Montgomery County)
- Designed to promote and facilitate the sale of farm products grown in the State to Maryland schools and to educate students about where their food comes from, how it is produced and the benefits of a healthy diet.
- The Maryland Department of Agriculture is responsible for establishing promotional events including a Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week. This year, Homegrown School Lunch Week is Sept. 13-17, 2010
- *Pertinent Statistics*
 - The National Farm to School Program has been in existence for more than 10 years with 950 farm-to-school programs in more than 35 states
 - Farmers in North Carolina sold \$500,000 worth of fruits and veggies to state schools in 2004-2005
 - There are approximately 950,000 public school students in 13,000 schools in 24 Maryland school systems.
 - In 2009, almost every school system did some activity and/or local food purchase as part of the week-long promotion.
 - More information: www.marylandfarmtoschool.org

- **Educational aspects**

- Help educate students about where their food comes, how it is produced, and the benefits of a healthy diet
 - See farm to school proposed lesson plans for more information
- *Purpose of Educating Students*
 - Our children live in a world where things are readily available. Most view fruits and vegetables as coming from a shelf in the supermarket rather than a farm. The Farm-to-School program will allow them to make the connection between the food they eat and the efforts it takes to make it.
 - Our children are our future consumers and decision makers. We need to teach them about the importance of farming and a healthy diet today so that tomorrow they can make decisions that are the most advantageous for the farming community, our environment, the economy and public health.
 - Child obesity is a growing concern both throughout the United States and in Maryland. Local fruits and vegetables provide an excellent source of nutrients and can contribute to an overall healthier diet. Farm-to-school will help our children learn the correlation between farm fresh produce and their health.
 - Educating our students on the benefits of buying local can provide excellent access to their parents. The children can talk to their parents about local products and encourage them to shop at farmers markets and stores selling local foods.

- **Buy Local Benefits**

- *Buying local supports our farmers*

- With the current economic downturn, our farmers are struggling to remain in operation due to the rising costs of production and energy inputs, development pressure and the aging of the farmer
- Buying locally can provide farmers with the economic stability they need to remain on their land and in production
- Small farms reinvest more money into local economies by purchasing feed, seed and other materials from local businesses
- For each dollar of revenue raised by farms, forest or open space, governments spend only 37 cents on services as opposed to developments that require more than a dollar.
- *Buying local is more nutritious and better for our health*
 - Our children deserve the best, most nutritious, freshest, tastiest, safest foods.
 - Fresh food tastes better. Produce is picked when it is at its peak taste, in season, most abundant, and the least expensive.
 - From a health perspective, fresh produce contains higher level of the nutrients necessary for our health. Vitamin content is depleted by light temperature and time, which are all necessary to transport food
 - Local foods usually undergo minimal processing and are distributed within a few miles of where they originate. This makes a big difference with the food concerns we hear about today. Tracing back products sold locally if there is a problem is easier.
 - The current salmonella outbreak has caused illness and the FDA still had difficulty identifying where it originated from and even what product was contaminated. Maryland knew right away through documentation from MDA's Food Quality Assurance office that Maryland tomatoes weren't implicated.
 - Even though Maryland wasn't implicated, it hurt many of our producers and our grocers, who had to pull all the products from their shelves for fear of liability. We can avoid much of this widespread public avoidance of products by looking to local products.
- *Buying local is better for our environment*
 - In the United States, the average grocery store's produce travels an average of 1,500 miles between the farm where it is grown and your refrigerator. This can mean between seven and 14 days in transit before they even reach the supermarket.
 - A tremendous amount of fossil fuel is used to transport foods such long distances. Everything from the truck to the refrigerator needed to store the food to the packaging, contributes to our carbon footprint.
 - Buying locally prevents the need for transport and significantly reduces the negative environmental impact
- *Buying local builds our communities*
 - Farmers markets, roadside stands, and fairs all bring together the community
 - Farms provide scenic routes and a beautiful landscape to enjoy
 - Farming protects our state's history. We were founded as a self-sustaining farming community.
- *Buying local maintains our food supply and creates jobs*
 - Maryland has 12,000 farms covering 2 million acres—about 1/3 of the total land within Maryland. The average farm size is 170 acres. The average net farm income per farm is \$49,547. A total cash receipt for all commodities was \$1.6

billion for 2006. Approximately 350,000 people are employed in some aspect of agriculture making it the largest commercial industry in Maryland